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C. C. CERTAIN, Editor

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The New Poem Games: Manifesto in Spokane*

VACHEL LINDSAY

THIS manifesto is strictly informal, a revision of the first one, and still open to suggestions from anyone who takes part in our revelries.

Mrs. Lindsay and I want this stuff to be as strong as *Every Man*, or any other medieval miracle play under the shadow of the cathedral. That will take a thousand years. But here is our start.

As fast as we make progress, we hope to write to the outside world about what we are doing. This is not so much vanity, as to deliver us from the idea that we are doing it for the people in the State of Washington alone. If it is a good artistic idea, it may take in Seven Oaks, England, before it does in Walla Walla; Europeans often take to American work by instinct, even when they do not understand it, better than our newly-great, even when they know precisely what is going on. Europeans have been longer trained to keep an eye out for the creative phosphorescent glamour of an attempt at art. They like other people who are watching out.

One general principle is to get the entire audience on their feet and taking part.

* Winter of 1926-27. This is the second of two papers by the late Vachel Lindsay, unpublished at his death. The first appeared in the December, 1934, REVIEW.

There is where the game comes in. To that end we have painted on our parlor floor a disc, a circle and an astronomic ellipse.

The other principle, which is the opposite, is to take it as hard as the pit used to take an Elizabethan play.

We want the whole thing to remain completely domestic, never to be society. The only costumes permitted are for taking part, and the more improvised, the better. Bathing suits are to be preferred to dress suits; bathing suits should be in extremely neutral tint, so all sorts of long draperies may be added instantly, of all colors and kinds. The longer and easier to play with the draperies are, the better. These are games.

The general principles of that magnificent Chinese play *The Yellow Jacket* are to be considered *ad infinitum*.

We want as many smart children under foot as possible, and in the way, if possible, because we won't want any of the kind of people around who want shows without children. We do not want nitwit kids, and we do not want smart alecks. But it is not a game if the children cannot play it; it is only one more stunt for the society column. The children must work

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up all the games they possibly can, their own way, at home. And they should give for interludes traditional games, like "London Bridge."

We want much slow sculpturesque work of the Elgin Marbles variety. Or the slow motion camera record of athletes in action contains many suggestions we might pick up. It will take a thousand years to come up to the Elgin Marbles, but the slow motion camera starts us that way. The motion should run the range from the slow motion movie reel to the whirling dervish.

In some ways, we are building on the Little Theatre idea, only we are dispensing with patrons, the formal stage, snobbery, long and arduous coaching, prim self-consciousness of the "Torchbearer" sort, a deficit, a nitwit audience; and it isn't costing us a cent. All we have to do is to holler and kick, and open the windows if the house gets too dusty and hot. And then sober up for the serious grand finales of the evening. None of the things that have made trouble in the Little Theatre are allowed.

It is a fine thing to have the children there, so that we will not swear too much. We take The New Poem Games very seriously, and feel we are started on an utterly new ideal, as far as Spokane is concerned.

As I look back over the progress of The Old Poem Games, from 1912 to 1926, pretty largely promoted by Eleanor Dougherty, Mrs. William Vaughn Moody and Charlotte Rudyard, and the enormous energy which I and my friends poured into them, I realize that the reason I dropped them was because they were moving in the direction of Little Theatre smotheration. Hence, our iron rule "He who will not act, neither shall he come."

One rule of The Old Poem Games which still holds good, is that there shall be no musical instruments and no musical

notation. We welcome Chinese wind bells, for such a poem as "The Tree of Laughing Bells," which is a parable of the first flight of an aviator to Asia (among other things). But musical notation ruins the chanting and the spontaneous choruses, which should never be twice alike, and the worse the better. We must leave a little bit to devilment and inspiration every day.

Also, the worse singers we are, the better for our stunt, because in chanting one should speak for the most part and sing only a little. It is very easy for the tune or the voice, if either are good, to run away with the words. We must stick to the words and find out what they mean. The dictionary, and not the orchestra, is our goal in music.

And there is a moment of high earnestness, at the climax of the game, which, if left out, destroys the game. Mr. Stoddard King at our latest session, when we entertained the Moroni Olsen players when they were passing through town, read at this moment his poem on apples and his poem about the star Sigma, which carried the hour into greatness. People not willing to be taken by storm should stay away. The climax should sometimes be as earnest as the Judgment Day.

Typical lighter poems for children to act out in their own fashion are Stoddard King's "The Lobster One-Step," "The Old Men of Melody," and "The Canaries and the Whales." Stoddard King now has a British Edition. So treat him right.

The Spencerian Poem Games are named so, somewhat ironically, in memory of the Spencerian system of penmanship. Mr. Spencer, the great teacher of penmanship at my old Alma Mater, Hiram College, all before I was born, taught everyone to write like steel engraving, then he taught them to develop this script into birds and flowers, into lions and storks. He liked to make a picture of

THE OLD POEM GAMES
AND THE NEW POEM GAMES

an eagle with a letter in its mouth going somewhere or other. If he had only used every man's natural handwriting as a basis of that man's drawing, instead of the watch-spring curve, we might have had a great school of art by now, for thus have Chinese, Japanese, and Arabesque schools of art been evolved by writing-masters.

For The Spencerian Poem Games, I write the name of one of the guests on a large sheet of drawing paper, in as curly and ornate a way as possible. Then with all the guests gathered around the table to suggest and help, we turn this piece of decorative writing upside down and sideways until we find the easiest way to make it into a bird, a flower or a boat, a castle or a mountain, a buffalo or a locomotive. Thus much is done with a pen stroke or two, and with all the guests intensely concentrated, as though for the ouija board; then we develop a little verse describing this picture and write it down. (Many of my verses, which have been printed in many places, have been so produced as a purely social act as a game in a studio or a hut. Many have been reproduced without the original pictures.)

The next step is to produce a dozen or half dozen of these picture-verses in half an hour, which can be easily done if the guests are silent and concentrated, as for a ouija board or table-tipping exercise. All the guests send close-range wireless messages to the pen and paper and ink.

Now we have to select one or three improvised poems, the more rhyme, of course, and repetition, the better for dancing purposes. For the rest of the evening, with the picture pinned to the wall, the dancers are to improvise their favorite couplets while the guests chant. They are to act and dance in any one of a thousand ways, according to The Poem Game idea. The main thing is high spirits, concentration, a full head of steam, the utter absence of dead wood and alien elements,

and so small a list of guests they can fill the dancing floor or gather around the drawing table, without crowding any body, and without dowager chatter.

The Spencerian Games are for a small concentrated select group for drawing, rhyming, singing, dancing, and acting, and all of it improvised the same evening, for the cleansing of the soul.

End of Fourth Edition of this Manifesto. This Manifesto has been circulated in Mimeograph Form for a few Spokane friends, throughout the winter.

Miss Lenore Frances Glenn, a very talented dancer of Spokane, Mr. Stoddard King, poet, and other of the Northwestern people have done a great deal toward developing and advising in these more recent poem games. It is my ambition that they shall teach the world.

Two sets of people have seen the Old Poem Games.

(1) Many have seen the work of Miss Eleanor Dougherty, sister of Walter Hampden, the actor, as she helped me before many audiences. "The Chinese Nightingale" production going out from The University of Chicago and Northwestern University worked out the Poem Game idea as it was originally conceived.

(2) Then another set of people have seen the origin of what I call The Spencerian Games. I have bent over with my fellow poets at a desk or table and showed them how to elaborate their names into pictures, but on no occasion in the East have we immediately arisen to improvise the resulting verses into dancing. The new step in The Spencerian Games is indicated in "A Swan Is Like a Moon to Me,"¹ when on the same evening the picture is drawn, the verse is written for it and the company dances it out.

¹ Published in *Every Soul is a Circus*, Macmillan.

Subjective Experience in Appreciation

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GROWING need of preparation for leisure gives new emphasis to the importance of teaching appreciation of æsthetic values. Bare necessities of living no longer fully occupy the time of people, and the trend is toward even more leisure in the future. It is still generally felt, nevertheless, that recreation must be justified for some ulterior, serious purpose. One may play because to do so conserves health and offers business opportunities. People organize in congenial fellowship for social welfare or mutual improvement. They travel or study to increase their usefulness. This is an appropriate time to consider other values than the practical and learn to seek recreation for its own sake. One of the services that education can offer children is ability to explore æsthetics for pleasure. It can give children experience in using leisure so that through it they shall have more abundant life.

Music, art, literature, and nature study have enriched and complicated the elementary school curriculum, but they have been to a great extent mere additions to a program whose only objective was acquisition of knowledge. Educators have consulted specialists in æsthetic expression for contributions to curriculum content. Special teachers in turn have imitated traditional teaching in academic procedure. A generation has memorized verbally titles, names, biographical details, and technical criteria for judging the æsthetic. They have practiced stereo-

typed responses of taste and judgment. Individuals with special aptitude probably have found in these scholarly exercises an approach to real interest. A greater number have found in them patterns of behavior that are an artificial defense against social inferiority. But there is no evidence that almost universal verbal education has produced general ability or inclination to seek recreation in æsthetics. The new leisure apparently requires of education habit formation on an essentially different basis.

This different basis may be found within the field of educational principle. Accepting the general axiom that experience is the vehicle of learning, the school is without doubt under obligation to offer opportunity for genuine, subjective experience with expression of beauty in many forms. Cultural exercises practiced for the sake of tradition should be eliminated. There is need to study the nature of appreciation itself; to observe under what circumstances appreciative response is spontaneous. Of course, definition of appreciation, even if it were possible, would not stimulate appreciative feeling. Neither will intellectual understanding of appreciation by educators guarantee its growth through school procedure. But analysis of its essential elements may give teachers a viewpoint from which to experiment, to observe, and to modify procedure in their attempts to give children meaningful experience with beauty. Analysis of the activity itself may lead

also to recognition of the difference between genuine experience in appreciation and mere recitation of accepted responses. The two activities, although similar in their manifestation, are diametrically different.

Observation of what seem to be people's most cherished appreciations indicates that many of them are built upon a broad foundation of repeated, sensory stimulation in childhood. People apparently see something, for example, in the natural scenery they are used to, and long for the ocean, or the mountains, or the desert. They respond with pleasant emotion to scenes that have a familiar element, but must learn to recognize and like the spirit of the unknown. Occasionally an audience interrupts the introduction to an encore to applaud, not the performance of musicians, but its own recognition of a familiar number. Any environment provides sources of continuous sensory experience that may have æsthetic value for the susceptible. But even a superior environment necessarily is limited to certain types of opportunity for valuable sensory experience unless enrichment is planned deliberately. It becomes a task of education so to supplement natural environment that children become used to enjoying a great variety of æsthetic stimuli.

This type of educative arrangement of environment calls for materials, some of which can be accumulated without economic investment. A growing sensitivity of teacher and pupils to beauty may reveal commonplace sources. Budget planning for school requisitions, however, might well be preceded by comparative evaluation of preparation for leisure as a school function. The school should be equipped with more than a volume of poems from which a few can be selected by the teacher for assigned memorization. Many sources of poetry are needed, representing a wide range in content,

difficulty, style, length, and taste. Children may hear these read frequently. Familiarity invariably leads to unforced memorization of more poems than can be accomplished by specific assignment. Pupils in one fifth grade, for example, in a year became well enough acquainted with about two hundred poems to quote from them aptly. Individuals in the class memorized perfectly from three to twenty-five poems, revealing wide variation in interest. But more significant than any memorization is the opportunity given, through repeated auditory stimulation, for all to hear something in poetry.

Similarly, more than a few sets of good literary prose titles are needed if children are to have experience with literature. Many single copies of books representing wide range of appeal can be used for selecting choice bits of prose diction to be gloated over frequently. Subjective experience in listening to music requires, rather than a few phonograph records of orthodox title, many selections expressing many moods, as well as extensive use of all available personal talent. Continuous exhibition of a few masterpieces of painting or sculpture may provide effective propaganda for the taste of children obedient in their sensitivities. Repeated opportunity to look attentively at many objects of art may provide experience in seeing something to them. Beautiful colors for lessons in looking may be provided in many forms: in several qualities of paper, in many kinds of textiles, in pottery, in chinaware, in plants or blossoms or gardens, in flames, in stones and shells. Lights and shadows are distributed as interestingly. Texture and grain in various kinds of wood is a fascinating observation. Architecture, either actual or pictured, offers extensive possibilities for enjoyment. Each type of natural scenery has its own charm in color and line.

Teachers would do well to accept the advice of specialists in selecting materials,

using most frequently those that have enduring value for the sophisticated. But to use only materials that satisfy the critical needs of a connoisseur would be a serious limitation of children's experience. Standards of taste should be liberal enough to admit practically all contributions made by enthusiastic children who have just discovered the joy of exploration into new fields of appreciation. Educationally, evidence of bad taste is better promise of growth in enjoyment than are either unthinking acceptance or indifference. Experience is a better vehicle than indoctrination for the development of appreciative feeling.

Although giving experience in appreciation necessitates use of many materials, neither quality nor quantity of material is of itself educative. A few people may be naturally sensitive to beauty in all branches of æsthetics; a greater number need to have their eyes opened to many possibilities. It is not the teacher's work to present objects with intent to persuade children of their value. If that were the task, specified materials and standardized techniques of argument would be the chief essentials of effective teaching. The teacher would be active, the pupils passive and receptive. Ultimate results in terms of new and deeper appreciations would probably be, in proportion to the reality of children's experience, practically negligible. The task is rather to *permit* children to experience many values in a great variety of objects. The teacher necessarily must provide leisure in terms of time, and leisure in terms of atmosphere for genuine enjoyment. She also must guarantee academic freedom for subjective experience. How to create atmosphere and how to guarantee freedom are not matters of simple technique. The method changes continuously with individual experimentation. Only by constant attention to atmosphere and freedom as immediate goals can the teacher become

sensitive to factors that are conducive to their consummation in her particular situation.

Nor is permitting children to experience values the whole task of teaching for enhanced appreciations. In spite of fine materials and carefully arranged opportunity for sensory experience, it is quite possible for children, even those who are not particularly stolid, to remain unaware of immediate environment. The teacher must aggressively stimulate attention: she furnishes the leadership that arouses alertness for values children might miss. Teaching techniques for sustaining subjective experience grow continuously out of observation of children's reactions. An individual teacher watches individual children, and freeing herself from the rules that lie behind educational practice, capitalizes spontaneous response. In the light of specific reactions she selects and arranges stimuli to deepen, to extend, or to refine feeling. The very nature of appreciative activity precludes standardization or even imitation of method. More essential, then, than personal sensitivity to beauty as a professional qualification, is ability to recognize sincere, subjective, sometimes subtle, expressions of appreciation, and to capitalize them as guides into further activity. Conscious practice gives increasing skill in recognizing those appreciations that suggest new avenues of interest. It also enriches the teacher's background in making her aware of values that she personally has not been responsive to.

Untutored appreciations are manifest in the whole bearing, as well as in the speech, of sensitive, culturally privileged persons. The evidence is inseparable from the feeling itself, although in no sense is expression a measure of feeling. There is no occasion for measuring or judging the degree of appreciation in individual children for educational purposes. The teacher does observe each child so that she may

help to widen his horizon of experience at each new level he attains. But individuals participating in the same learning situation may be responding to the subject matter in widely different ways and with varying degrees of success. The only homogeneity of grouping required is a common purpose of enjoyment. Fortunately the teaching of appreciations does not carry a burden of examination-grade-report-promotion tradition with its false emphasis upon comparison. Educators should jealously guard non-academic activities against mechanized standardization that limits possibilities of growth.

For not only is judging of appreciation unnecessary for grouping pupils or for planning lesson procedure; it is positively prohibitive of unselfconscious participation in feeling. This is somewhat true of measurement remote in its consequences from immediate activity—rating for periodic reporting to parents, judgment as a criterion of promotion; it is more characteristic of the informal, day by day, judgment of the teacher that children are usually too sensitive to. Unfortunately, attention to public opinion, personified by the teacher, is as distracting when it expresses approval as when it shows dissent. Appreciation has inherent import, a reward for success in expanding self, a punishment for failure in languor. As soon as an external reward or punishment is attached to appreciative response, purpose shifts from enjoyment to performance. Struggle for success creates competition and removes children's attention from æsthetic materials to people—to the teacher, to companions, and to themselves. In fact, children who unfortunately are dominated by a need for praise or blame can be helped to new independence in the studied freedom of the informal appreciation lesson.

It is further characteristic of unstructured appreciations that the sensory experience upon which they are based has,

in many cases, been repeated over a long period. The spell of the ocean is not exercised in one view; the fascination of a fine bit of prose is not realized in one reading. Extensive experience, however, is not synonymous with continuous experience. Pictures permanently hung may fail entirely to enter into the subjective experience of children, while pictures changed periodically attract attention. Pictures can be shown in a series, each for some seconds in a planned situation, so as to invite repetition of concentrated attention. Looking at pieces of colored silk fabric at varying distances, in varying lights, in varying combinations gives excuse for prolonging a lesson to impressionable length. The materials for giving appreciative experience should be available for review over a period of years. They should be carefully protected from the inflexible scientific grade placement that has limited the use of more traditional school equipment.

Incidentally, repetition of use also may give opportunity for free experimentation as a basis for independent taste. Meticulous care in procedure is required to direct participation to this end. For example, "Which record do you like best?" may constitute a test of taste which to many children could mean, "Which record are you supposed to like the best?" But, "Which record shall we play again?" can be, in an atmosphere planned for leisure and freedom, an invitation to subjective choice in repetition.

The type of teaching procedure being suggested takes time. It can hardly be consummated effectively in a fifteen minute exercise preliminary to the routine daily schedule. It should not be attempted in incidental scraps of time, although an informal program should, of course, permit instigation of such lessons by occasional interest. A graded school does not feel called upon to justify use of a hundred fifty minutes a week for arithmetic.

Nevertheless, increased specialization of vocation and mechanized computation indicate that perhaps better teaching rather than more teaching of arithmetic is in order. Accumulating hours of drill are devoted to mastery of "spelling demons," although many people could live effectively without infallibility in the matter of the *a*'s in "separate." Both knowledge and values in social studies change from decade to decade, but an hour a day in the later elementary grades for these studies requires no apologetic explanation. Economic trends at present indicate that within a generation the masses will be spending more time in avocations than in vocation. Evaluation of the place of appreciations among school objectives leads, not necessarily to a fixed assignment on the school schedule, but certainly to adequate allowance in the time budget. Children who are learning to use leisure effectively may well acquire the habit of definitely planning for regular recreation.

Futhermore, deliberate inclusion of ungraded enjoyment in the school program contributes to the informality that obviates duty and antagonism from the pupil-teacher relationship. One teacher, who had carefully avoided the use (and spirit) of the word, "lesson," in connection with appreciation activities, was confronted with the argument, "Don't quit. Can't you see that as long as you keep reading poetry to us, you won't have to teach?" It would be a serious mistake for teachers to share the feeling that teaching appreciations is not work. But teaching which can conceal its techniques in an atmosphere of informality and leisure is artistic. All the purposes of the school program may benefit by the happy connotation.

Observation of spontaneous appreciations of adults indicates further that they frequently are enhanced by being shared.

There is no firmer foundation for congenial comradeship than a common background of cultural interests. Perhaps no more effectively informal approach to a genuinely subjective school exercise can be planned than an apparently casual invitation to share an enthusiasm: "Here are some pieces of pottery that I like." Of course, this neither limits the teacher to her own special enthusiasms nor commits her to feigned ardor. In fact, it is fundamental to the achievement of freedom in cultivation of taste that the teacher, after providing materials of real æsthetic value and arranging a situation in which they really can be experienced, must refrain meticulously from propagandizing her own taste. To share and at the same time to be pleasantly uninstructional is difficult. On the other hand, stimulation of feeling on the part of children necessitates opportunity for expression of *their* feeling. Much more educative than observing and imitating the teacher's choice is social participation in pupil responses.

These reactions, if perfectly free, are far from uniform in their manifestation. Feeling at its best in sincerity and profundity may be manifested on the part of some children by silence. Anticipation of this form of expression requires the teacher to strive for an unhurried, quiet procedure so that leisurely silence may be exploited as a medium of expression. This type of response is quite apt to be characteristic of highly sensitive children. They need some measure of protection by the teacher against rude interruption on the part of more verbal, and perhaps less appreciative, classmates. At the same time these æsthetes should not entirely dominate the class mood lest the situation become hushed and solemn. Whatever the particular subject matter being used, observation of various children in a class gives the teacher cues for changing the

The Menace of the Series Book*

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ANOTHER Book Week has come and gone, another Christmas season. Libraries have displayed the most delightful and carefully selected books of the recent publications for children, experts have reviewed them in magazines and newspapers, children's librarians and authors have talked here, there and everywhere, and while through their efforts the knowledge of good books has spread, there are two sides to every picture, and no voice has been lifted in warning against poor books.

Perhaps one reason for this is that as soon as any book is proscribed for children, it immediately becomes a matter of controversial disagreement. There are quite definitely two schools of thought on the matter of children's reading. One believes that children should be allowed to read anything they please, and that to read even the cheapest kind of trash is better than not to read at all. Their argument is that poor beginnings are better than none at all, and that the child who has become accustomed to the printed page may gradually be led to better things.

The other school believes just as firmly that it would be better for a child not to read at all than to waste his time and deaden his mentality with crude language, impossible and melodramatic situations, and a commonplace vocabulary.

It is hard to pick one's way fairly between this Scylla and Charybdis, and perhaps the most satisfactory way of doing it is to admit at the start that both are right,

and both are wrong. Having thus supported and disposed of both sides, one can go back, and make a fresh start.

Both sides are right, but they can equally both be wrong. No general hypothesis can be stated and left, when dealing with a child, for everything depends on the child himself.

A naturally poor reader may sometimes be tempted to take a more kindly attitude towards books if his attention is arrested by something unusually exciting, and his limited and painfully acquired vocabulary not overtaxed by its style. Equally, on the other hand, a potentially good reader may become sidetracked by the very same book, and, yielding to its melodramatic lure, develop a taste for the sensational which will, if not carefully checked, presently obscure the tender shoot of his literary appreciation. For the idea that all children are naturally good readers is pure fallacy. Even as they grow step by step in their general education, so must they grow step by step towards the appreciation of good books. And too often there is no one to guide them. There would be no question of what a child's choice would be if it lay between spinach and ice cream, and why should it be supposed that his intellectual appetite should be so much more highly developed that he would prefer *Treasure Island* if his other choice was *Tom Swift*? Literary appreciation does not "just grow." It is carefully fostered. A good reader is not an accident. He is the product of a widely read past, tended and inspired by contact with those who have already come to appreciate the best about the printed page.

* Prepared under the direction of Miss Ethel Wright, Chairman of the Book Evaluation Committee of the Children's Librarians' Section of the American Library Association.

There are plenty of agencies to-day ready and willing to advise on good books for any age of child. There are fewer who will blacklist the worthless. That may be because of possible controversy, but nothing is the worse for an airing, and it is a lamentable fact that there are many parents and teachers who have never realized that there are worthless books, sordid, sensational, trashy and harmful books; or, vaguely, they admit that there may be some such but certainly *their* children never read them. The controversial stage is all set now, and the conflagration may be lighted by mentioning a few specific titles.

"But I read those in my youth, and they didn't do me any harm," is one of the stock objections, to which the obvious, but silent, retort is "And look at the kind of reader you are now." That is not always fair. Sometimes the omnivorous reader has covered the good and the bad, and has developed along with both. But more often it is true that the reader who looks back on the trash read in his youth, and does not recognize it for trash, has not carried his reading tastes very far.

But what, parents will argue plaintively, is a harmful book? A harmful book, in their definition, is something that will have a direct and immediately pernicious influence on a child's moral character.

No book has a direct and immediate influence, either good or bad; its influence is something more gradual, more insidious and subtle, and in consequence, far more difficult to estimate, and if a poor influence, more dangerous because of its invisible spread. A harmful book is one that is so lacking in inspiration that it does not add to the breadth of the imagination and experience of its reader, one in which the characters have no living equivalent, and, particularly in series books, one where the vocabulary is so limited and the characters so repeated, that after acquiring one set of words, and getting to know one set of people, the reader may go through as many as fifty

books without ever having to use his mind or imagination again. Overdoses of this type of reading result in mental laziness which will, if not taken in hand, prevent the reader from ever finishing a book which requires any effort whatsoever.

A girl in the fifth grade was a poor reader. The principal of her school talked with her mother, and suggested the girl join the public library. They went to the cheery children's room, and the children's librarian, already aware of the case from the school principal, took down book after book, suited to the child's reading ability, left her to browse, left books out on the table, all in vain. The child was bored by it all. "I don't want these books," she whined finally, "Mother, take me downtown and buy me a Ruth Fielding."

This was a case where the deadening influence of poor books had passed the subtle stage, and become a real menace to the child's reading future. Yet many parents and even some teachers, have never thought of there being any harm in series books.

The cat is out of the bag at last. Series books are the menace to good reading; dozens and dozens of them, in rows and rows at any bookstore, and frequently, in cheaper bookstores, the only juvenile stock carried. And the children clamor for them. Once they start on a series they will go right through it like a spreading fire. Horatio Alger has no less than 121 titles to his name, Harry Castleman with the "Frank" series, has 126, Edward Stratmeyer, with the "Rover Boys," 112, and the "Bobbsey Twins," "Ruth Fielding," "Uncle Wiggly," and "Tom Swift" series each run into lamentable dozens, on which boys and girls may spend half, or all their reading youth, and never know how they have wasted their time.

For these books lack color and vitality of any kind. It stands to reason, if one but stops to think of it, which few parents do, that no writer can be other than hackneyed, wooden, and uninspiring

when he carries one theme through twenty or thirty books. And yet these parents as adult readers are often quick to notice the deterioration of adult novels which have been produced by one author within too short a period of time to allow for literary merit. Why should we passively accept for children that which we reject for ourselves?

One of the best tests of a good child's book, is whether a literary-minded adult will enjoy it or not. On such a basis children's librarians in school and public libraries strive to make their selection so that only the best will be found on their shelves. Frequently this good work is neutralized when teachers, in order to increase their classroom libraries, ask the children to bring some of their own books to school. Wise parents, who have worked hard to foster literary good taste in the minds of their children, are dismayed when these children suddenly sprout into an orgy of the ungrammatical commonplace "Bobbsey Twins," the sentimental, unscientific "Uncle Wiggly" books, the unnatural, pseudo-heroes of some Boy Scout stories, and, perhaps worst of all for insidious influence, the overly-sentimental girls' school stories.

But there are also teachers who are among the foremost to realize the dangers of these books from their point of view. "The children get used to one vocabulary," they say, "and in ten of these books, they may never increase it by so much as one word. Of course they like these books; they don't have to think."

If anyone should doubt the prevalence of this kind of trash in the average home, he needs only visit the nearest school after it has had a drive for books, and see for himself the mass of worthless material, not worthy of the name of literature, which will accumulate from it. Under wise supervision this trash will find its way to the furnace, where it belongs, but sometimes such a drive only leads to a wider dissemination of this pitiful substitute for literature.

A few years ago, Mrs. Mary S. Root published a list of series books with the provocative title "Not to Be Circulated."¹ If she could have been another Savonarola, and destroyed every copy in the country in a huge bonfire, our boys and girls would have been that much better off. As it was, she started a minor conflagration which nearly burnt the print off the pages in its intensity. No censorship seemed to be the basic opposing idea, and in its way, a thoroughly sound one.

The book forbidden is always the book desired above all others. Means more subtle than a flat edict must be employed. One obvious solution is not to be inveigled by an adept salesman into buying a book on the strength of the picture on the jacket; not, in fact, to give to any child a book of which the purchaser does not have some previous knowledge.

But there are always aunts and uncles and cousins, who give books for Christmas and birthdays, to say nothing of the underground library by which children obtain almost anything they want to read, and into whose workings we should do well not to inquire too closely. Such a situation calls for tactful handling. As an antidote there is nothing better than to have plenty of good books around, and to know something of what lies between their covers. A peculiarly obstinate case may yield when the same type of story, infinitely better done, can be substituted. There is scarcely a series book whose prototype may not be found with real literary merit. Children's librarians are trained to know what to offer as substitutes, and all over the country they are ready to help and to serve. They are, in a way, literary doctors. No thoughtful person would let a child suffer with a toothache or an illness through lack of care. Let us see that no child may lose his potential literary taste through thoughtless neglect.

¹ Wilson Bulletin 3:446. Jan. 1929. Discussion, March, April, June, 1929.

Are Children Still Reading Standard Fiction?*

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ARE children still reading the standard fiction of literature? The answer, as they say in the House of Commons, is in the affirmative. But I suspect that some of the subscribers to *The Elementary English Review* are already questioning, "Do you really *know* or are you merely giving a personal opinion based on what has happened to come to your notice?"

A few years ago we began to collect on cards the comments children made to the librarian or to one another on books they had read. These, after perusal, we filed away under the author and title of the book about which the comment had been made. This simple and usual procedure has cured us of the bad habit of generalizing from perhaps one experience, so that we no longer are prone to say "Oh, children don't like Dickens" or "won't read Scott" when our only foundation for so sweeping a statement is the recollection of a girl for whom Sidney Carton died in vain or a boy who eyed with dislike a dull-looking book in a dull cover with the dull-sounding title of *The Abbot*. More important than any conjectures of ours about them are the boys' and girls' own spontaneous opinions about what they do and do not like to read, and by recording these we are building up gradually certain definite information which we can consult regarding what might be

called the "case histories" of the books themselves; who has liked them; who has not; and to some extent the age, sex, and reading background of those who have contributed to the "case histories."

Our observation tells us that perhaps the most common request in our children's libraries is for "an adventure story." Because, while the world of today is full of things that are real and material, things to talk of, to do, to see, it seems to boys and girls so empty of opportunity to fulfill a universal and more vital need for imaginative sustenance. Perhaps these boys and girls are finding their own escape from a material world through books, and if so the literature that is made available to them becomes of extreme and increasing importance. By the time their interest in dragons and giants (even Cyclops) is outgrown, boys and girls are ready to turn to later times than fable, and to find adventure, which rarely comes to them in their normal circumstances, in stories of strange countries and other times where they suspect life to have been filled with thrilling incident.

It seems to me that one of the soundest foundations for boys' and girls' reading taste, and also one of the most delightful, can be built through books of high adventure of which the historical novel offers perhaps the greatest richness of subject and interest. The abstract qualities idealized in the best of these books are admirable: courage; humor in difficulties;

* Prepared under the direction of Miss Ethel Wright, chairman of the Book Selection Committee of the Children's Librarians' Section of the American Library Association.

boldness that has genius, magic and power in it; loyalty to cause and leader; directness and clear initiative. But the ultimate success of the historical novel can best be measured perhaps by the interest it arouses in historical characters rather than in the deeds of a fictional hero.

The historical story which is about children, most of them all too dully successful as heroes or heroines, is as often as not untouched by contact with imagination and the spirit of joy engendered by encounter with high adventure. Such books only confirm boys' and girls' impression of the lack of life-enhancing adventure in their experience of life, and fail to satisfy the spiritual appetite of contemporary youth. Bertrand du Guesclin and Sir John Chandos are passed over as unimportant characters in comparison with Eustace in *The Lances of Lynwood* but they live again in the stirring pages of *The White Company* and *Agénor de Mauléon*, and it is with great satisfaction that boys and girls hail them as old friends in Froissart's *Chronicles* and learn that the stories they have read about them actually did happen during the Hundred Years' War.

To breathe the breath of life into the characters of history, so that they are as real to the mind's eye as they ever were to the eyes of their contemporaries, a writer must travel far along the great white road of the imagination. He may know texts and facts but what does it all come to without that white road and a biting keen sense of the past? That is really all we mean when we talk about the standard novel in historical fiction. In it we find the specifications by which all other historical tales may be tested, and in giving them to boys and girls we are also giving them a standard of comparison which will help them to formulate sound literary judgment in their later reading.

It is impossible in so brief a space to quote more than a few of the children's comments on the standards but our sta-

tistics show that 48,260 standard novels were taken from the children's rooms for home reading last year. The list of authors whose books are included in these figures is given at the end of the article. Probably you are no more impressed by statistics than I am, and as a reply to your unspoken question, "But how do you know children actually read the books?" I submit the following comments of the boys and girls themselves.

A girl in grade eight read *Sea Tales* by Conrad and asked for more. She read later, *Romance*, *The Rover*, and *Nostromo*, and said, "*The Rover* is the best book of his I have read so far. But I like any books written by Conrad."

Girl of thirteen to friend: "Jean you're crazy if you don't take that book. You didn't want to take *The Black Arrow* did you, and you liked it. Well you'll like *The White Company* just as much."

Boy of twelve: "Oh yes, I've read *Micab Clarke*. Have you anything else of Conan Doyle's? If you have, give me it, and I'll read it and I'll like it." (Very positively.)

Girl of thirteen bringing back *The Vicomte de Bragelonne*: "Oh, I do wish Dumas wasn't dead. I wish he would go on writing. He's my favorite author. I've read all you've got and *The Years Between*, and the Broster books and all the Scott you have. But Dumas is the best."

A twelve year old boy returning *The Three Musketeers*, said, "Say, I'll have to get this renewed again, it is so good, and my father took it from me and wants to finish it too. He's always taking my books. He seems to like each one I bring home better than the last."

"Have you the second volume of *The Count of Monte Cristo*?"

"I'm afraid it's not in. Did you want any other?"

"No thanks, I don't believe I could read another book until I see how that ends."

(Spurred on by this, volume two was routed from the incoming books.)

"Well, now I've got that, I'll take *Twenty Years After* as I'd like to know what happens to the three musketeers too."

Raoul of twelve years: "No, I don't like dry books. The only dry book I ever enjoyed was that." (Pointing to *The Count of Monte Cristo*.) Librarian (in surprise, especially since he had read Dumas with avidity): "Why dry, if you

enjoyed it?"

Raoul (also surprised): "Well, you know, *no action* in it."

"Where's the next book to this, *The Three Musketeers*? My, it was exciting. Milady there, lying to each one of them, and you'd almost believe her yourself." This from a stolid looking girl of twelve or so.

"You have to watch that fellow Dumas. Sometimes he goes wild."

"Oh, in which does he go wild?"

(Lugubriously). "*The Memoirs of a Physician*."

Boy of about thirteen: "Oh, I'd like some historical fiction. I've read every Scott I could find. *Westward Ho!*? That was the first book I read here. That was what caught me for sea stories."

Of *The Last Days of Pompeii*, a girl said: "I do wish I hadn't read that book yet so that I could read it for the first time again."

Girl of thirteen: "I have been reading *The Last Days of Pompeii* and *Quo Vadis*. They are the best I've read for ages! Have you any good books about the Greek gods? There is so much mentioned about them in these two books, I should like to know something of them." Later, returning *Children of the Dawn* and *Tanglewood Tales* and Bulfinch, "I didn't like *Tanglewood Tales* at all—but the *Children of the Dawn* was lovely. Have you any more?"

Overheard between two girls in the eighth grade. "I see you've read *Scottish Chiefs*. Didn't you like it?"

"Yes," hesitatingly, "but I skipped a few fighting pages."

"You skipped some pages! How could you? I read every word and then wanted to read it again."

"Oh, Ettie, you should read *The Cloister and the Hearth*. It's all about a boy who has all kinds of adventures and goes away and at last he comes home and is a monk—that's the cloister, and there's a girl and she stays home—and that's the hearth."

Sixth grade girl after reading *The Talisman*: "Gee, I hope that man Scott has written lots more books."

Sylvia, aged ten: "Can you tell me if the story of Amy Robsart is really true, and did Queen Elizabeth treat her the way it said?" She had read *The Talisman*, *Ivanhoe*, *Kenilworth*, and had *Quentin Durward* at home.

Girl of thirteen returning *The Talisman* and *The Torch Bearers*: "Oh! I liked *The Talisman* best, it is a good book. I didn't think much of the other. I want to take something quite different

now." (Exit having chosen *Louise de la Vallière*.)

A boy leading a new member to the Stevenson shelf (in crescendo): "Boy! *Kidnapped*—*Treasure Island*—*The Black Arrow*! You can't take three, so it's hard luck. They'll never be in again!"

Boy to friend. "Take *Kidnapped*. I'm telling you, it's a perfect book."

Another phase of the standard novel is that particularly delightful field of literary achievement, the novel of manners and the domestic sphere, by writers who have gained, and give, a great deal of amusement over the foibles of their fellow creatures. Probably no books give boys and girls a richer and more lasting joy than those of Charles Dickens. Watch the face of any reader of Dickens, young or old, as you mention Mrs. Harris, The Wellers, Mr. Pecksniff, Sary Gamp, all of them, as Mr. Cabell says, more vital and worthy of consideration than folk who cannot read Dickens.

Small boy of eleven, barring the librarian's way out of the Reading Club. "Say, could I have that book?" The transference is made, and he says more to himself than to her, as he looks down with tender, loving amusement at the large volume under his arm. "I think I'll follow up that Mr. Pickwick!"

Of *David Copperfield* a boy of twelve said. "That book is all right but dry and sloppy at the end. *Oliver Twist* is the one I like."

"I have read all Dickens but that one and *Oliver Twist*. A girl told me to be sure to get Nicholas. She said whenever she wanted a cry she read *Nicholas Nickleby*; whenever she wanted a laugh she read *Nicholas Nickleby*; she read it through and then she always wanted to start over again." (A Dickens reader of twelve, a girl, discovered by a chance request for the second volume of Nicholas.)

Twelve-year-old boy to companion: "Oh Boy! there's old *Nicholas Nickleby*. Gee, that's a book for you. I've read it and read it."

Subdued laughter was heard in the library the other day, and a small boy (fifth grade) was discovered at one of the tables, convulsed with merriment. He had just discovered *Pickwick Papers*, and was completely oblivious to everything

else in the room. When he left he remarked, "I'm getting this out—it's funny!"

"Bill! hey Bill! I'm gonna to get *this* book if it's here when I come back." (*Pickwick Papers*.)

Little girl shouting with triumph. "Betty! I got it!" (*Pickwick Papers*.)

One girl to another, aged thirteen or so. "You've had that book before." (*David Copperfield*).

"I know, I'm fond of it."

A girl was seen reading aloud to her friend with the most evident enjoyment, the opening paragraph of *A Tale of Two Cities*. "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, etc." which one might be inclined to tell a child to skip.

"Mother said Dickens was dull but I have read *Oliver Twist*, *Pickwick Papers*, *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge* and I read four chapters of *David Copperfield* but mother wants me to read *Chicky*."

New borrower. "Have you the Curly Tops books? There are eighteen and I have not read them all."

Librarian. "No, but have you read any books from the library?"

New borrower. "Oh, yes. I loved that first book you gave me, *The Cricket on the Hearth*."

A twelve year old girl took *Lorna Doone*, *Jane Eyre* and *Kim* as summer holiday books saying, "I'll have time to read them now; in the winter I thought I couldn't finish them in two weeks so I've saved them for now."

Annette (eighth grade) was given *Lavengro* in the Riverside edition which is slightly cut. She enjoyed it so much that soon after the suggestion was made of reading it complete (in the shabby old brown Everyman edition) Result. "Oh! I am so glad I read the whole thing, it was more than worth it."

Sixth grade girl. "Could you get me another story like *Jane Eyre*? I don't seem to ever find anything I like since that."

"Take *Jane Eyre*, it's a good one."

"Isn't it kinda long?"

"Oh, no, when I read it the pages just flew by."

First girl: "*Jane Eyre's* about the best book I ever read."

Second girl: "Did you read *Anne of Green Gables*?"

First girl: "Oh, that!"

A twelve-year-old girl read in the front of *Villette* that the Brontës had written some other books. She wanted to know if we would ever be getting them so she could see if they are as good as this and *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane*

Eyre. Also she thinks they must be a queer family to all be writing books.

A girl of twelve returning *Adam Bede* and *The Cricket on the Hearth*. "Have you got another book like *Adam Bede*, I liked that so much but I didn't like *The Cricket on the Hearth* and I am so sorry because I loved all the other books of Dickens."

From a girl who had been offered *Jane Eyre*. "Well, I'll try it. Of course, I don't like sad books and that sounds pretty sad. I wept all night after I read *The Mill on the Floss*, it was so sad. Poor Maggie."

"Believe it or not, *Silas Marner's* in!"

A girl in the eighth grade rushed in, dropped on the desk, *Little Women*, *Marbacka* and *Lilicrona's Home*. "I had the best books this time! But have you got two copies of *Cousin Phyllis*? We both want it because our friends have all been reading it and said it was wonderful."

Quite a little girl in seventh grade took *Cranford* very dubiously* and bringing it back remarked in surprised tones, "Wasn't it a funny story!" She recommended it to her friend, and herself took out *Quality Street* which she enjoyed very much.

A twelve-year-old girl: "Have you got any more books by the author of *The Return of the Native*? I've read it twice and think it's wonderful."

An older girl who had read very little came and asked for Tess. I gave her *Under the Greenwood Tree* and only discovered when she brought it back that what she had wanted was *Tess of the Storm Country*. She said that *Under the Greenwood Tree* was "the best book I have ever had" and she had taken the trouble to copy the list of his other books from a back page. She took *The Trumpet Major* and *Maria Chapdelaine* and the next week she took *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *Shiny Night*.

A girl in the eighth grade brought *Henry Esmond* in, saying she had liked it so much she would like another book just like it. I found she had read the books by the Brontës, *Lorna Doone*, *John Halifax*, some of Dickens', in fact, practically all the books of the nineteenth century that we have in our limited school library. She went away with *Scottish Chiefs*.

Girl of twelve: "Say! please renew this book—it's one of the best I've read. Mother wants it after me. What others are there like that? It's funny." (*Vanity Fair*.)

Boy of eleven repeatedly ramming his elbow into the back of his friend, and holding up

Pilgrim's Progress: "Look! Look! Look what I've got! *Pilgrim's Progress*!" (Then all in one breath) "I've wanted this book for a couple of years, and now I've found it, and I am going to read it."

A boy of eleven after reading *Robinson Crusoe* said, "You know he gives you a lot of tips on what to do if you were ever shipwrecked." Another boy said of it, "It's great; there are adventures right up to the last page."

Seventh grade girl to friend. "*Don Quixote*. There's a book I often read."

"Isn't he the loony guy! He's so loony he thinks he's the perfect knight, and he takes a stick and a dishpan and goes after a barber, and he's so crazy he thinks the barber's another knight and he thinks his dishpan's a shield and his stick's a sword. Now can you beat that!" His friend took the book. (*Don Quixote*.)

In the reading of standard fiction boys and girls are not only acquiring a habit of solid reading, but are also developing, and exercising increasingly, a certain amount of taste and ability to choose. A children's librarian told of watching an eighth grade girl, who uses a library in her school, on a visit to the children's room of a branch library. This girl went quite thoroughly over the shelves (a much larger and less select collection than the school library) and finally brought to the desk to be marked out *Green Mansions* by W. H. Hudson, *The Queen's Necklace* by Dumas, and the Methuen *Anthology of English Verse*. The children's librarian, who is also in charge of the school branch, said that none of these titles happened to be in the school library; nevertheless they were chosen from over two thousand books in a room where the

arrangement was unfamiliar, by a girl whose only guide was the books she had read and enjoyed.

Taste, or choice, said someone, is the recognition of superiority wherever it is to be found. The creative writing that has given what we call "standards" their universal and permanent value appeals inevitably to the creative imagination of youth, reminding us that all spirit is mutually attractive. Do we not all know boys and girls who know Pip and Nicholas Nickleby, John Ridd and Di Vernon on quite other and more intimate terms than they know the Tom, Dick or Harriet of the latest "juvenile," and who instinctively feel the difference between them? What boys and girls require of us is that we put in their way some satisfactory material upon which their native initiative, intelligence, imagination and growing experiences can progress.

STANDARD FICTION USED IN TORONTO CHILDREN'S ROOMS

Jane Austen; Sir J. M. Barrie; R. D. Blackmore; George Borrow; The Brontës; J. Bunyan; F. Burney; Cervantes; W. Collins; Joseph Conrad; J. F. Cooper; Daniel Defoe; W. De Morgan; Charles Dickens; Conan Doyle; A. Dumas; George Eliot; Anatole France; Mrs. Gaskell; Oliver Goldsmith; Thomas Hardy; N. Hawthorne; O. W. Holmes; Louis Hémon; W. H. Hudson; Victor Hugo; W. Irving; C. Kingsley; Rudyard Kipling; William Kirby; Bulwer Lytton; H. Melville; W. Morris; D. Mulock; Edgar Allan Poe; Jane Porter; Sir A. Quiller-Couch; Charles Reade; Sir Walter Scott; H. Sienkiewicz; R. L. Stevenson; Dean Swift; W. M. Thackeray; Leo Tolstoi; Lew Wallace; T. Watts-Dunton.

A CORRECTION

In the November, 1934, number of *The Review*, in the bibliography accompanying an article entitled "Four Questions about the English Curriculum and Their Current Answers" appeared a reference to a course of study in language issued by the Depart-

ment of Public Instruction of North Carolina (page 244, column 2). The address of the department was given incorrectly as Charlotte. It should have been Raleigh, North Carolina.

The School Library: An Aid to Reading

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OUR library reading program is under the direction of our librarian,¹ who, besides being a trained librarian is also one of our kindergarten teachers. She is therefore in close relationship with the other teachers, serving as a guide in stimulating reading and assisting in supplying proper books by visiting the various classes, learning of the teachers' interests, and referring new material to them.

The procedure developed in our library both stimulates an interest in reading and affords rich and varied experiences through reading. It offers the backward child an opportunity for browsing and choosing easy reading which suits his own taste. Assistance is given the children and opportunities are afforded for fixing good habits in reading thought units, and for overcoming the tendency of slow dull children to read word by word, to make lip movements and to point to one word at a time. As soon as a child finds a book he likes, he reads it for pleasure, and the joy that he gets in satisfying his own desire builds up a longing for continuous work which will help him in future reading. Thus by handling and using a variety of attractive books under favorable circumstances, the children's knowledge is broadened and their personalities enriched so that a progressive attitude toward all school work is set up. Besides this, the beginnings of reference work are

done by easy stages and the informality of the instruction does not hold back the child from enjoyment of the task. One little thing at a time removes possibilities of strain, confusion and discouragement.

In all the work, the goal is to have the children join the public library as early as possible. To encourage joining the library, letters are sent to the parents requesting them to co-operate with the school in this enterprise. When a child brings in the library card and the first book taken out, he is given a commendation slip. By this method, the home and school are brought in close contact with each other and parents become acquainted with the progressive methods now in use in our schools. It makes them eager to have their children take advantage of the library and to make it a more potent factor in their lives as they progress from grade to grade.

In carrying on the work, supervised instruction is given in the use of books. A daily period is provided from 12 to 12:30 for second year classes to visit the school library for free reading, for instruction in the use of the library and for a few brief oral compositions. Besides this, visits are made to the library for three days preceding holidays by kindergarten and first year classes for picture appreciation and story hour work. The circulation of books includes week-end circulation to pupils of the 2-B grade (each child selecting a book and charging himself with it), and the circulation of books to each of the third

¹ Miss Frances Vaughan. Miss Vaughan holds a B.S. in library science from the Columbia University School of Library Service.

and fourth year classes. Ten books are given to each class for the period of time agreed upon with the teacher. Owing to the smallness of the book collection, circulation must be limited. By the circulation of the books, the influence of the library is extended into the homes of the children.

Instruction in the care of books is planned in such an inviting way that it awakens the children's interest in having clean hands, in opening a new book correctly, in handling it carefully to preserve its life and use, in covering it to keep it from becoming unnecessarily soiled and worn, and in marking it with a bookmark or a narrow strip of paper. Judicious praise stimulates the children to live up to what they know about the proper care of books. In the use of books, special attention is called to (1) the title of the book, (2) the title page, (3) the table of contents, (4) the body of the book and (5) the illustrations.

The work in the library extends its usefulness to the various subjects of the course of study. Much bearing upon initial work connected with the library is being done in composition, geography, history, nature, and visual instruction. This is done by teaching the pupils the use of books as a means of gaining needed information. These lessons are made definite and concrete and bring out as much as possible the immediate as well as the future use of this knowledge to the pupil. This purposeful activity stimulates the children's interest in reading.

The materials which we have used are:

1. Books dealing with animal stories, holiday stories, stories of social science, fairy tales, fables, folk lore, stories of children of other lands, stories of how to do and make things, poetry, and books compiled by the children or

by the teachers whose subjects deal with the daily experiences of the child and the activities arising therefrom.

2. Pictures portraying the seasons, occupations, days celebrated, children of other lands, and current happenings suited to the interests and progress of the children.
3. Exhibits received from the (1) Museum of Natural History (2) The Brooklyn Children's Museum and (3) the teachers; such as cases of insects, birds, small mammals; collections of Indian relics, of dolls representing different nationalities, of utensils used in various countries; replicas of buildings or conveyances peculiar to certain countries, as an igloo, a Swiss chalet, and a Japanese jinrikisha; and industrial charts of the leading commodities of foreign countries such as the coffee industry in Brazil.

The kindergarten room is used. The equipment consists of tables and chairs, a piano, bookcases made by the boys of the seventh and eighth year classes, a catalogue case, a shelf list case, a bulletin board, pictures, window boxes, two filing cases and improvised files and exhibit boxes made by the pupils of the lower grades.

The results for the home and school are both formal and cultural. Under the formal we can place: (1) the increased care of books; (2) the appreciation of library regulations; and (3) the increased membership in the neighborhood public libraries. Under the cultural are: (1) the development of realization on the part of the children of the interrelation of charts, pictures, etc. to the text; (2) the enlargement of the speaking vocabulary of the children; (3) the training in method of attack for reference work; (4) the increased desire among the children to read widely in newspapers, magazines and books; and (5) the dissemination into the homes of the children of realization of the value of a library.

Editorial

Developing Appreciation

IN THIS number of THE REVIEW, several phases of the question of æsthetic good taste in literature are presented.

Vachel Lindsay's article, "The New Poem Games," describes a spontaneous rhythmical expression of pleasure in poetry which undoubtedly has a bearing upon refinement of taste. The child who has had the experience of interpreting poetry through dancing, gains not only in the capacity to enjoy rhythmical literature, but should he possess any talent whatever, in ability in creative expression. John Merrill¹ of the Francis Parker School has emphasized this same point in his concern that children be given the opportunity to interpret poetry in pantomime and dance. He has cited many instances of pupils' subsequent writing of verse and plays as a result of this active expression of appreciation.

In her article on page 4, Miss Helen Campbell discusses the subject of elementary school training for appreciation. Of particular significance is her insistence that such training be free from the all-too-common pretenses of many school lessons purporting to be creative and æsthetic. This she accomplishes by removing the occasion for insincere and affected response. Since unaffected pleasure is, in essence, spontaneous, the teacher who wishes to see it develop in her pupils must forego her prerogative of question and answer, and trust to carefully arranged environment. The materials

suggested for the creation of such an environment are simple, and obtainable with little expense, but their proper handling from the æsthetic point of view requires much discernment. The very fact that the outlay is inexpensive and readily obtained imposes upon the teacher the responsibility of selection, arrangement, and orderly housing of these stores. Only extraordinary good taste and care will insure against a clutter that will defeat the ends sought.

The papers on books by Miss Kinloch (page 9) and Miss Smith (page 12) bear a close relation to this whole question of appreciation. Books are, after all, perhaps the strongest factors in determining the cultural atmosphere of home or school life. Inane and vulgar books, Miss Kinloch points out, have an almost drug-like effect upon a child's taste, rendering him insensitive to literary style, and unwilling to exert himself mentally. She insists, very reasonably, that a good reader is not an accident; that a child's undeveloped taste in literature is no more to be trusted than his taste in food.

The other, and more hopeful side of the reading question, is given in Miss Smith's account of the experiences of her staff in the Boys and Girls Division of the Toronto Public Library. Here is concrete evidence of the effects of right selection of books, and careful direction of reading, on children's book preferences and literary tastes. The examples she gives show the heights of literary discernment to which children may rise under proper library and school training.

¹ Merrill and Fleming—*Play Making and Plays*. Macmillan.

Reviews and Abstracts

WILLIAM G. CAMPBELL

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Exploring the Earth and Its Life. By James Lindsay. Illustrated. Frederick A. Stokes, 1933. \$1.75.

When the average child visits a natural history museum, he usually comes away with a confused impression of hundreds of objects which seem to bear no relationship to each other, although each one is in itself interesting. The author of this book, in an effort to make such a visit more instructive and valuable than is now the case, has attempted to give the reason for grouping objects as they are displayed. The entire volume is based on the evolutionary theory, each step in the progress of animal development being skillfully and interestingly depicted. One of the most enlightening sections of the book is that which deals with the historical development of man and his activities. People from as widely separated lands as the South Sea Islands and the North Pole are described in their relation to the present high plane that man has achieved.

This book will be read with great interest by children in the upper elementary grades and the junior high school, particularly in localities where a museum enables them to see the actual exhibits here described.

Where is Adelaide? By Eliza Orne White. Illustrated. Houghton Mifflin, 1933. \$1.75.

The heroine of this story, Adelaide, is such an elfish little orphan, and is so difficult to handle because of her loveliness, that she is passed on from one relative to another. Finally, however, she comes under the influence of Marty, the cook, a kind and wise old woman from whom Adelaide will stand any amount of plain talking because of her love. The story is based on the actions and antics of this little girl while in the elementary grades. It will be read with interest, particularly by girls, in any of the grades above the fourth.

Farmer Boy. By Laura Ingalls Wilder. Illustrated. Harper and Brothers, 1933. \$2.00.

Sixty-five years ago, on a big farm in northern New York, there lived a little boy named Almanzo. He, his brother, and his two sisters went to school when they could, although the demands of farm life took most of their time. In the most delightful way, the author has detailed the activities that filled one

year of the life of this farmer boy, beginning in the winter and going through the spring, summer, and fall seasons. The activities of farm life, particularly those festive occasions that accompany the widely separated holidays so generally observed by farm people, make intensely interesting reading. This book is admirably suited for children in grades three to six.

Tales of a Russian Grandmother. By Frances Carpenter. Illustrated. Doubleday, Doran, 1933. \$2.50.

The setting of this book is in itself most interesting—a large country estate in old Czarist Russia. Here the children get their aged nurse, grandmother of their little Russian playmate, to tell them the stories of old Russia that she heard from her grandfather. In addition to the tales themselves, each of which will hold the attention of any child, there are descriptions of many of the colorful activities of Russian life—ceremonies, the hunt, and the play indulged in by the children of that vast and little understood empire.

The large number of colored illustrations will make this book easily intelligible to children as low as the third grade, although it is better placed from the fourth to the sixth grades.

Get-A-Way and Háy János. By Maud and Miska Petersham. Illustrated by the authors. The Viking Press, 1933. \$2.00.

Get-A-Way is an old toy horse from America; János is a wooden soldier doll from Hungary, old and faded but still proud and boastful. They travel together through the land where old toys become new and gay again. Their adventures are amusing. János, a famous character in Hungarian literature, tells tall tales about himself, and Get-A-Way is wise and old and tolerant. Children will love the book as they love their favorite toy.

The sixteen full-page colored lithographs and the large number of black-and-white illustrations will make this book particularly attractive to young children. The work is highly recommended for pupils from the upper half of the first grade through the third grade.

The Petershams have written a large number of books, but this is probably one of their best and one of the most profusely illustrated.

(Continued on page 24)

Shop Talk

Poetry Broad-sides

TEACHERS, supervisors, and librarians who take to heart Miss Campbell's suggestions, will find, in the new series of Poetry Broad-sides published by the Enoch Pratt Free Library of Baltimore, attractive material, at modest cost, for appreciation lessons. Poems, selected by teachers, children's librarians, and the librarian of the Enoch Pratt Library, have been printed, one to a sheet, in most cases, on large sheets of paper (17 x 22 inches). Each Broadside has a different typographical design, appropriate decoration, paper, and ink. The list of titles con-

tains poems suitable for children from the first grade through the high school. Edward Lear's "Owl and the Pussy-cat," Elizabeth Maddox Roberts' "The Hens," Tennyson's "Sweet and Low," Robert Frost's "Mending Wall," Ben Jonson's "Hymn to Diana"—anyone is bound to find some favorites in the list, and to be charmed into accepting others as favorites by the fine typography of the Broad-sides. Address Miss Elsa L. Berke at the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, for information.

Share Your Discoveries

MANY of us will find help in Miss Sloan's suggestion for teaching difficult verb-forms. Almost every teacher has developed some device that really works for teaching a

troublesome subject. Why not share it with *Review* readers? The *Review*, you know, is a co-operative undertaking.

One Way with Troublesome Verbs

PUPILS in the upper grades frequently have difficulty in knowing when to use different forms of certain verbs, particularly *lie*, *lay*, *sit*, and *set*. In my classes, although the pupils memorized the meanings of these verbs, and talked of the actions represented by them, there were some who persisted in confusing their uses.

I finally worked out a plan which, though some teachers may already have used it, I should like to pass along. We cut from magazines colorful pictures suggesting the actions represented by these troublesome verbs. These pic-

tures we mounted on poster paper, and labeled each with the appropriate verb-form. For example, there was a picture of a smiling little girl sitting under a rose-bush, and another of a one-year-old child lying under his first Christmas tree.

The posters were hung about the room so that they were constantly before the pupils. I hardly need to add that even the dullest pupils mastered these troublesome verb-forms.

—Neva Dott Sloan,
Charleston, Illinois.

Two Aspects of Appreciation

AT FIRST glance, there may appear little relationship between the gay, humorous article by the beloved Vachel Lindsay on The New Poem Games (page 1) and the consideration of aesthetics as a school subject by Miss Campbell (page 4). Nevertheless, the similarities are numerous.

For people of Lindsay's vivid and utterly sincere temperament, appreciation may take an active form, and in so doing, be transformed into something creative. But, in Lindsay's own words, "People not willing to be taken by storm should stay away." One needs only recall Lindsay's tart comments on stunts for the society

column, "torch-bearer" leadership, and the like, to realize his contempt for self-consciousness and insincerity.

But that does not mean that we others—inarticulate, awkward, shy—need be unresponsive to beauty in literature, music, line, color, texture. Lack of training, and a sheepish suspicion that pleasure in lovely things is affected, have excluded many of us from a great source of comfort and satisfaction, Miss Campbell's article suggests means of overcoming this, and of developing aesthetic appreciation in grade-school children. The second half of her paper will appear in February.

Fourth Annual Meeting

of

The National Conference on Research in Elementary School English

Atlantic City, New Jersey—February 23, 26, 1935

Saturday, February Twenty-third

<i>Eight thirty A.M.</i>	{	Breakfast and Research Report Meeting
<i>to</i>		The Blue Room—The Ritz-Carlton Hotel
<i>Eleven-thirty A.M.</i>		(Eighty-five cents per plate)
		Reservations in advance; write the
		Secretary-Treasurer of The Conference.*

Presiding: WARREN W. COXE, Director, Educational Research Division, University of the State of New York, State Education Department, Albany.

Report of the Committee on Unpublished Research in Elementary School English: A Digest of Outstanding Current Research Manuscripts.

Presentation of the Report—JOSEPHINE MACLATCHY, Chairman, Ohio State University.

Discussion Leaders: ANGELA BROENING, Baltimore Public Schools, Supervision and Research; BESS GOODYKOONTZ, Assistant Commissioner of Education, National Office of Education.

Report of the Committee on the Evaluation of Research Problems in Elementary Composition, Language, and Grammar.

Presentation of the Report—ETHEL MABIE, Chairman, Supervisor of the Department of Curriculum, Madison Public Schools.

Discussion Leaders: ELEANOR M. JOHNSON, Editor, The American Education Press; M. R. TRABUE, Department of Research, School of Education, University of North Carolina.

Tentative Report of the Committee on Criteria for a Manual of Style for Elementary School Teachers of English—ROBERT C. POOLEY, English Department, University of Wisconsin.

Business: Appointment of the Nominating Committee.

<i>Twelve O'Clock</i>	{	Luncheon and Meeting of the Executive Committee
<i>Noon</i>		Main Dining Room—The Ritz-Carlton Hotel.

Tuesday, February Twenty-sixth

<i>Eight-thirty A.M.</i>	{	Breakfast and Business Meeting (Active Members)
<i>to</i>		The Blue Room—The Ritz-Carlton Hotel
<i>Nine-thirty A.M.</i>		(Eighty-five cents per plate)
	{	Election of Officers—Other Business
		Active Members Only

<i>Twelve O'Clock</i>	{	Luncheon and Research Report Meeting
<i>Noon and Early</i>		Green Room—The Ritz-Carlton Hotel
<i>Afternoon</i>		(One dollar and seventy-five cents per plate)
		Reservations in advance; write the Secretary-Treasurer of the Conference.*

Presiding: WARREN W. COXE, Director, Educational Research Division, University of the State of New York, State Education Department, Albany.

The Third Annual Research Bulletin—Reading Disabilities

Presentation of the Bulletin—EMMETT A. BETTS, Chairman of the Bulletin Committee, Superintendent of Practice, State Normal School, Oswego, New York.

Critical Evaluations by: WILLIAM S. GRAY, School of Education, University of Chicago; ARTHUR I. GATES, Teachers College, Columbia University; DONALD D. DURRELL, School of Education, Boston University.

Research Techniques Peculiar to Elementary School English

HARRY A. GREENE, Director, Bureau of Educational Research and Service, State University of Iowa.

Officers of the Conference, 1934

President: WALTER SCRIBNER GUILER, School of Education, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.

Vice-President: WARREN W. COXE, Director, Educational Research Division, University of the State of New York, State Education Department, Albany.

**Secretary-Treasurer:* C. C. CERTAIN, Wayne University, Detroit, Michigan. Convention address: The Shelburne, Atlantic City, N.J.

Executive Committee: Officers of the Conference and HARRY A. GREENE, State University of Iowa, Iowa City; ROBERT POOLEY, University of Wisconsin, Madison; M. R. TRABUE, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

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REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS

(Continued from page 20)

Gaston and Joséphine. By Georges Duplaix. Illustrated by the author. Oxford University Press, 1933. Price \$2.00.

Gaston and Joséphine here make their first bow to a public who will ask for more of their antics, which will be supplied in the near future. They are an irresistible couple of French pigs, depicted by a real artist with a lively sense of humor.

This book will be a favorite in every home and

will draw chuckles from old and young alike. It is best suited for grades two to four, although if a child is able to read the particular style of print employed, it may be read as low as the high first grade.

The popularity of Walt Disney's "Three Little Pigs" will enhance the possibility of using this in the lower grades and enlisting the attention of young children.

SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE IN APPRECIATION

(Continued from page 8)

tempo of the lesson in the interests of healthful restraint. The significance of silence is not marked by its duration or its intensity, but by reserved spontaneity. Probably the teacher never should capitalize such a situation beyond its first unaffected simplicity, but should occasionally interrupt the mood by wholesome casualness.

Feeling, in another mood or for other children, is most sincerely expressed by a quiet comment to the teacher or another child. Selfconsciousness or pedagogical formality might easily result from requesting repetition of an unselfconscious remark. There is no need to "speak so that everyone can hear you" if the purpose of speaking is neither to impress nor to inform, especially if to do so would interrupt another who is enjoying thoughts of his own.

Another childlike means of appreciative response is a chorus of *Oh's* and *Ah's*.

For some reason it accompanies looking more often than listening. This form of group response is socially so delightful and so contagious that it may become an idle habit, a meaningless end in itself. But informal checking of vocal exercise need not constitute inhibition of further self expression. Early substitution of material for which exclamation is obviously inappropriate usually prevents distraction.

Special interest in some particular material is sometimes evidenced by efforts to repeat or to prolong its use. "Take the picture to the opposite side of the room and let us look at it from a distance." "We could try draping that blue silk against the screen instead of letting it fall in folds on the table." "Why don't you read that poem ("Stars"—Sara Teasdale) over again and see how it will sound if you go real slow on the word, *ma-jes-ty*."

(To be continued)